

# King County Office of Human Resource Management

Report No. 92-5

Susan Baugh, Senior Management Auditor  
Nancy McDaniel, Management Auditor Intern  
Dao Tang, Auditor Intern

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

▶ [Introduction and Background](#)

▶ [Objective and Scope](#)

▶ Major Findings:

▶ [Finding](#) - County's recruitment, examination, and selection process lengthy and cumbersome.

▶ [Finding](#) - Affirmative Action Program relatively efficient.

▶ [Finding](#) - Excessive processing time for classification and compensation requests substantially reduced in 1991.

▶ [Finding](#) - Improvements in Classification/Compensation Section's records management system needed.

▶ [Finding](#) - Improved agency communications and records management practices needed to strengthen labor relations function.

▶ [Finding](#) - Progress achieved in implementation of personnel board study recommendations; further improvements still pending.

---

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The management audit of the King County Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) was requested by the 1991 Chair of the Council Operations and Administrative Services Committee. The impetus for the audit was the Council's interest in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the County's recruitment, certification and selection; affirmative action; position classification and compensation; and labor relations functions. In addition, OHRM's progress in addressing the findings and recommendations of the 1989 King County Personnel Board *Study of the King County Personnel System* was reviewed.

OHRM administers the County's personnel system and provides professional personnel services and support to employees, county agencies and, as appropriate, residents of the County. The

1992 adopted operating budget for OHRM was \$2 million, which included 42.25 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions to provide County personnel services.

---

## OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE

The audit objective was to determine the general efficiency and effectiveness of the County's human resource management processes related to recruitment, examination and selection; affirmative action; position classification and compensation; and labor relations.

The audit scope was limited to the review and evaluation of County recruitment, certification and selection; affirmative action; position classification and compensation; and labor relations processes. Audit analysis focused on the efficiency of these processes; the qualitative merits of OHRM decisions (i.e., was denial of reclassification request justified, etc.) were not reviewed. The methodology included the examination of all State and County laws as well as all policies and procedures related to the County human resource management functions. In addition, OHRM performance indicators and records related to 1991 recruitment, examination and selection; affirmative action; position classification; and labor relations workload were evaluated.

Two human resource management surveys were also conducted during the audit process. The first was a survey of all County departments to determine user satisfaction and identify potential problems with OHRM services. The second was a survey of 13 public jurisdictions to determine the relative resources and services available for other local or comparably-sized human resource management agencies.

---

## MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1. County's recruitment, examination, and selection process lengthy and cumbersome.

The lengthy timeframe and excessive paperwork associated with the County's recruitment, examination and selection practices frustrated both County agencies and applicants. The audit found that an overall average of 12 weeks was required to fill a County position. The County's time-consuming examination process increased the average hiring time to 18.5 weeks for positions for which new examinations and registers had to be developed.

***The audit recommended*** that OHRM continue to develop and implement methods to reduce the time required to fill County positions, such as reducing reliance on the structured resume; improving records management and monitoring practices to determine which steps of the recruitment and selection process could be accelerated. In addition, OHRM should investigate low-cost computerization of the tasks associated with filling County positions, and continue to

develop and refine performance standards for discrete elements of the recruitment and selection process. The audit also recommended that OHRM reallocate resources to eliminate the unique personnel system hiring backlog, and reduce the average hiring time for the unique personnel system consistent with the average for career service and civil service positions.

## Finding 2. Affirmative Action Program relatively efficient.

OHRM's Affirmative Action program functioned relatively efficiently, based on the average time required to process a selective certification review (2.7 days) and a selective certification waiver review (3.5 days). Nevertheless, County agencies were frustrated with the program's efficiency and effectiveness in select areas, such as specialized recruitment efforts.

**The audit recommended** that OHRM continue to provide training to County management on selective certification procedures, and encourage agency participation in the establishment of agency goals and identification of positions to be selectively certified. OHRM should also focus recruitment efforts on classifications across all job categories with large numbers of position hirings to maximize its resources and to increase the number of qualified individuals from under-represented groups.

## Finding 3. Excessive processing time for classification and compensation requests substantially reduced in 1991.

The excessive time required to complete a classification or compensation request decreased substantially in 1991 with the creation of the OHRM Classification/Compensation Section. Specifically, the average processing time for classification and compensation requests decreased from 15.9 weeks in the first half of 1991 to 9.7 weeks by the end of the year. However, further time reductions were necessary for OHRM to meet its new performance standards (e.g., a reduction of 2.6 weeks to meet OHRM's performance standard of 6 weeks to classify a new position).

**The audit recommended** that the Classification/Compensation Section continue its efforts to reduce turnaround times for classification and compensation requests, and monitor its adherence to internal performance standards. Performance standards should be established at levels that are demanding yet reasonably attainable.

## Finding 4. Improvements in Classification/Compensation Section's records management system needed.

While the Classification/Compensation Section had initiated new record-keeping and monitoring practices to track classification and compensation requests, the audit found that some records were still incomplete or inaccurate.

**The audit recommended** that improvements in the Section's records management system to increase the reliability of its workload data and, thus, promote better accountability in the Section.

Finding 5. Improved agency communications and records management practices needed to strengthen labor relations function.

The County labor relations function was relatively effective given staffing constraints. However, improvements were needed, including increased communications with County agencies on labor relations and collective bargaining agreements, and improved records management of employee grievances and complaints.

**The audit recommended** that OHRM disseminate approved collective bargaining agreements to all affected County managers, develop and maintain source documents and management logs for employee grievances and complaints as well as Personnel Board appeals, and develop performance standards for grievance and complaint processing. OHRM management should also review grievance/complaint reports quarterly to determine if employee policies or procedures could be improved to preclude similar issues in the future. In addition, grievance/complaint reports should be submitted to the Council, as required by the County Code and budget proviso, along with any suggested management improvements.

Finding 6. Progress achieved in implementation of personnel board study recommendations; further improvements still pending.

Progress was made by OHRM in the implementation of the Personnel Board Study recommendations. Specific improvements included increased accountability to County agencies with the establishment of timeframes for completing agency requests; the initiation of an eight-session supervisory training program; progress in streamlining the County's hiring process; the transfer of the Affirmative Action Program to OHRM; the implementation of a 3-year cyclical classification review; a reduction in turnaround times for completing classification requests; and the formation of a Labor Policy Advisory Committee to provide clear direction on County labor issues. However, further improvements (e.g., replacing the structured resume with valid, practical testing tools to expedite the County's lengthy examination process), which could lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness in County human resource management practices, were pending.

**The audit recommended** that OHRM continue to implement the recommendations of the King County Personnel Board to increase the accountability and responsiveness of the County personnel function.